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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

THE PHILIPPINES AND "SELF-DETERMINATION"

SIR,—“ The Philippines again! Surely, we have heard enough about the Philippines—more bother to us than they can possibly be worth,” says, perhaps, a reader. The first we heard about them was when President McKinley, at the end of the Spanish War, after whipping Spain and taking Cuba from her (to tie it “ with a string ” to the United States), suggested that we should also take her “ leavings ” in the Pacific, which were, *de facto*, ours by conquest, as he said: the Philippine Islands. “ Self-determination ” was not in the air then, and to clinch the affair it was arranged, as a condition of the treaty of peace with Spain, to pay \$20,000,000 for them, stock, lock and barrel, throwing the people in, just as serfs or “ souls ” used to go with the land in old times in Russia. It seemed all serene—on a western tour the President’s suggestion that it would be a good thing to be a “ world Power,” having caught on, in rear-platform addresses. Realizing the situation, if there had been no objection raised to the new “ imperialism ”, with the acquisition of this outpost the United States could have gone ahead as Germany had been doing for nearly twenty years (giving us warning, as Admiral Dewey told us, by her desire to obtain this very outpost herself), building up a big military establishment ourselves suitable to the new attitude, and so have been “ prepared,” according to the fullest jingo ideal, for the events of 1914!

Perhaps it might have been as well! The thing did not slip through comfortably even with McKinley’s winning manipulation. It was only a molehill, thrown up by an entrenching opposition in the way at first which had to be faced, no mountain—in fact more like the Horatian *ridiculus mus*. Those who began the opposition in 1898, mature men, are dropping like the leaves in Vallambrosa. There are few left who remember how on a June day in that year, stirred by some words of protest in the newspapers, the writer made a visit to the late Gamaliel Bradford and suggested to that zealous publicist that the two should “ hire a hall ” and there propose a protest against the extension of the United States sovereignty over eight millions or so of brown brethren on the other side of the world, without their consent.

So the infant “ Anti-Imperialist League ” was born and rocked in the Cradle of Liberty, Faneuil Hall, and baptized the nineteenth of November following. Its nineteenth annual meeting was held a few weeks ago.

Its history is that of the struggle, first against the ratification of the treaty with Spain so as to prevent the acquisition of the "possessions," and since to cause atonement to be made for what was thought "the deep damnation of" their "taking"—thought so by them and by the representative half million of quickly and easily acquired adherents to the league, with many prominent members of the President's party, like Benjamin Harrison, Thomas B. Reed, John Sherman, and George S. Boutwell, the league's first president. He kicked over the traces and became an opponent upon this contention of the organization which he had represented so long as Secretary of the Treasury and Senator. Senator Hoar was the leader of the movement in Congress, and in speeches of invective, like those of Cicero and Brutus and Edmund Burke, denounced his official chief for the departure from our national principles. School boys who had heard him might well have "marked and written" these words of eloquence "in their books," and they will be found a mine for historical quotation.

It was the secretary's duty to sustain the league's contest in Washington, and Senator Hoar showed a hesitating mind himself, which was very interesting, to one at his elbow, as to the advisability of party rupture. As he mused aloud, he dwelt on the strength and popularity of McKinley, which were impressing themselves upon him as he said: "There might even be a filibuster—if—?" Party affiliation was too strong for him and he remained in the Republican ranks, forgiving but not forgetting. On the Saturday night before the Monday when the ratification of the treaty was to come up in the Senate, its defeat seemed assured by the final promise given the Secretary by Senator Mason that he would join in the vote against it, if his vote should be needed to determine the question. Stopping on the way to Boston to see Mr. Carnegie at his house in New York, the philanthropist, who had been the league's God-father, with \$1,000 birthday present, came out eagerly from an important parlor conference in which he was engaged to be told of the situation, and said at once that his influence with the Senator was considerable and that he would press it by letter. Mr. Carnegie kept his word, but his letter did not reach the addressee until the vote was passed and the treaty was ratified with Senator Mason's vote. Had Mr. Carnegie used a "special delivery" stamp the fate of the Philippines might have been different! The \$20,000,000 he offered afterwards to reimburse the Government if it would release the islands could not prevent that which ten cents might have forestalled!

Mr. McKinley's only argument to the writer, when the case of the League for the Philippines was presented to him, with that pat on the coatsleeve (his winning way), was: "You would not have me give them back to Spain, would you? As "giving back" was impossible, since they had not been Spain's to "give back," there was no respectful reply possible! The Filipinos had already won their independence before Dewey came, and had cooped the Spanish power in Manila, ready for easy conquest by the alliance of the native forces with those of the United States.

While the United States was putting down the "insurrection," which was simply a passionate struggle for the maintenance of freedom against our imposed sovereignty—freedom that Aguinaldo and his

countrymen thought the United States was to leave them to enjoy, after their joint success in the *coup de grace* to the Spanish power—the Anti-Imperialist League, having been foiled in the attempt to urge a friendly recognition of the autonomy of the islands, opposed with all its power the “marked severities” of the conduct of the war against the Filipinos. When there came the conquered peace (*La tranquillité regne à Varsovie*) then ensued the United States government by a commission. Its head, President Jacob Gould Schurman, came back to testify that the Philippines should be independent. The chief of the new administration which followed, William H. Taft, Governor General, who had opposed the original acquisition of the archipelago until persuaded by McKinley to “make the best of it,” fed the Filipinos on remote and vague hopes which were no more satisfactory, perhaps more provocative, than the avowed “colonial” conviction and purpose of his successor, W. Cameron Forbes. Working “agin’ the government,” the two potent arguments all along against our urgent pleas for justice, any time from the first to the nineteenth year of “possession,” were McKinley’s “smart” phrases: “Americans do not scuttle,” nor “Ever pull down their flag,”—sounding brass and tinkling cymbals! Meanwhile the Anti-Imperialist League was busy in maintaining the ideal of Philippine independence in the islands and in the United States, and especially with the Democratic party, into four successive platforms of which we promoted the writing of the plank pledging autonomy to the archipelago.

When the party came into power the lid was off. Governor General Harrison took the reins, with the slogan fresh upon his lips: “The Philippines are our heel of Achilles,” and behind him was the Organic Act passed by Congress called the “Jones Bill,” promising independence, to be granted to the Philippine Islands upon timely application for it. The future held two possibilities—the continuance of the Philippines as a colonial possession of the United States, as the investor probably desired, in their own interests and which Mr. Taft thought desirable and Mr. Forbes essential. Some reactionary Filipinos, indeed, may be content for awhile with Filipinization of offices and with a promotion of economic development, and would advocate if they dared hanging up the ideal and promise of independence. They can not persuade the ambitious, self-conscious Filipino to be humiliated permanently by the colonists’ dependency and to see his labors and his bloodshed wasted. Were such an attitude general, the United States might realize a position predicated by Governor Boutwell and implied in Governor General Harrison’s dictum—that in certain events, the more the Filipinos wanted us, the less we should want them. Their status defying the Monroe Doctrine in principle, would expose the United States also in case of war to certain, even if temporary, disaster in remote “possessions.”

But the World War holds out a better promise. “Self-determination” is in the air, the fires of liberty are rekindled in the Philippines, the pledge of it is taken out of storage and things are in a fair way to the initiation of a movement to ask of Congress, according to the promise of the Organic Act, the “grant” of independence, that it may be ready for ratification and guarantee along with that of all the “weaker peoples” at the after-war council of permanent peace. Such was the proposal of the Anti-Imperialist League at the annual meeting the other

day, indorsed by the Resident Commissioner from the Philippines, the Hon. Jaime C. de Veyra, who said:

I am perfectly in accord with the suggestion that our independence be granted in time for ratification by the after-war council. This is a wise step in view of the reiterated declarations of President Wilson and of the fact that the principle of self-definition is to be one of the unequivocal bases of a general peace.

Let us hope for "the Day" when the United States will set the example by its realization in the Philippines of the great world principle of self-determination.

NEW HAVEN, CONN.

ERVING WINSLOW.

LABOR UNPREPAREDNESS

SIR,—Without attempting to apportion the blame for our culpable unpreparedness in spite of ample warning, and for our supineness, indifference and delay in asserting and maintaining our rights when they were trampled upon, which have beyond question prolonged the war, and caused incalculable loss both of life and treasure, it becomes every one's duty, if continuing unpreparedness is apparent in any direction, threatening our success now that we are in, to raise his voice in protest.

That unpreparedness does exist in connection with the labor situation, is as evident as that it can be remedied if considerations affecting politics are disregarded.

In a report submitted to the Senate on the 16th of January by a committee representing all the leading industrial and manufacturing associations throughout the country, it is stated that there are still constant strikes and threats of strikes in all sections with the sole purpose of preventing the employment of any but union labor. It is further stated, as must be evident to every one, that there is a wide and serious shortage of labor. This could not be otherwise when there is considered the abnormal demand for war work, the crying need for increased agricultural production, and the withdrawal already of more than a million men chiefly from the ranks of labor for service in the army.

That this shortage must steadily grow greater is plain. There will soon be another draft, taking another million from work. As they become soldiers and non-producers, the amounts of ammunition and military supplies for them must be enormously increased, requiring more employees, and almost more important, we must next Spring plant and later harvest greater food crops than ever before, for ourselves and our allies.

Where are the laborers coming from, and where are the 100,000 or more sailors to be had to operate our new merchant marine? We are told also on all sides that one of the principal reasons for coal shortage is lack of sufficient men on the railroads. We see already the farmers protesting against the shipyards and munition plants for luring their hands away from them by bidding as high as \$9 per day for workmen, and saying the result will surely be a decrease in the acreage planted instead of an increase.

The following contains the substance of reports received from all parts of the country by the New York Board of Trade and Transporta-